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Puppet performance 'Punschi' dazzles family audience

BY [KATHLEEN MCWILLIAMS](#) • SEPTEMBER 29, 2014

By Zarrin Ahmed

Families gathered in the small theater room in the Ballard Museum of Puppetry to watch “Punsch” by Sandglass Theater on Saturday afternoon.



Jana Zeller and her sister, Shoshana Bass, were the performers.

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The entire performance consists of two shows “Kasper and the Cow” and “Fritzi’s Flea Circus.”

35 years ago, Zeller and Bass’ parents, Eric Bass and Ines Zeller Bass, founded the Sandglass Theater in Munich, Germany. They moved the theater to Vermont in the mid-1980s. Mrs. Zeller Bass is now the Director of the Sandglass Theater’s children’s programs. She created “Kasper and the Cow” with her daughters, who recall helping her make all of the puppets and props.

The show began with a musical number: Zeller played the ukulele while Bass played the accordion. Then they introduced the first show, “Kasper and the Cow.”

A big umbrella stood in the middle of the stage, and around it, a curtain. At the top of the curtain was just enough space for Kasper, a red-headed puppet who was packing his suitcase for a trip. While Kasper went to say goodbye to his mom, a cow came and took his suitcase. With help from the audience and from his friend Augustin the giant Kasper went on a chase to find the cow and his suitcase.

For the next show, Bass brought out a whole set up of a circus. The circus was small because it was made for Fritzi the flea. The concept of the flea circus was inspired by a real one that takes place during Oktoberfest. As Zeller described it, during the 1800s, real fleas put on circus shows and traveled the courts.

During this performance, Fritzi the flea performed many different acts. From eating breakfast to the grand finale cannon blast, Bass narrated the entire show with music from a bazooka.

They put on two performances on Saturday afternoon so that families would be able to make either show.

Zeller has created three full-length puppet shows geared towards an older audience. She and her sister own their own puppet companies. Bass is a physical performer, doing many aerial shows as a part of the Frequent Flyers in Colorado. She now teaches in Vermont. Though the sisters weren't always doing puppetry, they said it was "a beautiful thing to return to" because it was now a family tradition.

Last winter was the first time the sisters' mother decided to hand her daughters the show. Touring the country together and performing is something Zeller described as special.

The Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry will host more weekend shows for families. The next one is on Oct. 15 called the "Biblical Rapper's Trilogy," featuring a rapper from the Bronx called Not for Profit.

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